

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

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DRAFTED BY AF/P:BARUSSELL:ADR
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
XMT AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY BANGUI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING FEB 21, 1978

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE NOON
BRIEFING FEBRUARY 21, 1978:

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON DAVID AARON'S MISSION?

A: YES. LET ME SAY WHAT I HAVE ON DAVID AARON'S MISSION
TO THE HORN. A FAIR AMOUNT OF IT -- WELL, IT IS NOT A
LOT IN ANY CASE, BUT A FAIR AMOUNT WAS PUT OUT OVER AT THE
WHITE HOUSE THIS MORNING. I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT WAS PUT
OUT OVER THERE JUST SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO BACK AND
FORTH.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS RECEIVED PERSONAL ASSURANCES FROM LT.
COLONEL MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM, HEAD OF THE ETHIOPIAN
GOVERNMENT, THAT ETHIOPIA DOES NOT INTEND TO CROSS THE
SOMALI FRONTIER.

THESE ASSURANCES WERE CONVEYED BY DAVID AARON, THE PRESI-

DENT'S.SPECIAL EMISSARY TO ETHIOPIA, IN A MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT CARTER THIS MORNING.

MR. AARON ALSO CONVEYED A PLEDGE BY ETHIOPIA THAT IT WILL
NOT INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANY OF ITS
NEIGHBORS.

THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT ALSO INFORMED MR. AARON OF ITS
WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE A NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR, AND THAT
AN AGREEMENT TO DO SO WOULD BE FORTHCOMING IN THE NEAR
FUTURE. THIS WOULD BE DONE TO PROVIDE BETTER CHANNELS OF
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND THE UNITED STATES. THAT
WAS THE WHITE HOUSE GUIDANCE.

THE GENERAL STATE GUIDANCE SIMPLY IS THAT WE BELIEVE
THAT THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN MR. AARON AND COLONEL
MENGISTU WAS HELPFUL TO BOTH SIDES. IT AUGURS WELL FOR
OUR RELATIONS IN THE FUTURE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE AARON
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED ITS PURPOSE OF IMPROVING COMMUNICA-
TIONS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT.

THAT IS ABOUT ALL THAT I HAVE ON AARON'S MISSION.

Q: I AM JUST WONDERING WHETHER THIS ASSURANCE THAT DAVID
AARON RECEIVED WAS ANY DIFFERENT IN ANY WAY FROM THE
ASSURANCE A FEW CONGRESSMEN RECEIVED LAST NOVEMBER, I
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THINK IT WAS.

A: I THINK, JUST ON GENERAL BACKGROUND, ONE, THOSE SAME
CONGRESSMEN STRONGLY RECOMMENDED, AS YOU KNOW, THAT SUCH
A MISSION BE UNDERTAKEN. I AM SAYING THIS ON BACKGROUND
SIMPLY BECAUSE IT REALLY ISN'T OUR BUSINESS TO BE SAYING
ANY MORE THAN THAT. BUT THEY FELT THAT THIS KIND OF
DIRECT EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN LEADERS WOULD
IN FACT HELP, NO MATTER WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN RELAYED.

ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WAS FOUND OUT THERE, IT WAS HELPFUL.

Q: HODDING, IN RELATION TO THAT, DID AARON ASK OR RECEIVE
ANY ASSURANCES RELATING TO THE PRESENCE OF OUTSIDE
FORCES IN ETHIOPIA, WHICH APPARENTLY ARE INCREASING AT A
STEADY RATE?

A: I AM NOT SURE. I COULD HARDLY BELIEVE THAT THE
SUBJECT DIDN'T ARISE. BUT I DO NOT HAVE A READ-OUT ON

THAT. PERHAPS THEY DID DO MORE OF THAT THIS MORNING AT
THE WHITE HOUSE, OR ARE NOW DOING.

Q: COULD YOU LOOK INTO THAT? THAT SEEMS TO BE A RATHER KEY POINT.

A: YES. THE OBVIOUS QUESTION. YES. I WILL SEE. WHETHER -- I MEAN, THE QUESTION HERE IS ANY ASSURANCES ON THE QUESTION OF OUTSIDE FORCES.

Q: DO YOU HAVE AN UP-DATE ON THE NUMBER OF CUBANS AND RUSSIAN ADVISORS THERE NOW?

A: THE LAST THAT I HAD IS ALSO THE LAST THAT I HEARD WHEN I WAS MONITORING HIS BRIEFING -- IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD STILL OF 5,000 CUBANS, AND I DO NOT HAVE MUCH MORE THAN UNCLASSIFIED

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A THOUSAND RUSSIANS, AS I LAST LOOKED AT IT, AND THAT WAS THIS MORNING. I DON'T HAVE ANY NEWER FIGURES ON THAT.

Q: COULD YOU ALSO TAKE WHETHER WE TOLD THE ETHIOPIANS THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE CUBANS AND THE RUSSIANS OUT OF THERE, AS WAS SAID BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY?

A: I DON'T THINK I HAVE TO TAKE THAT. THAT IS AN EXPRESSION THAT WE HAVE MADE PRETTY CLEAR.

Q: I KNOW PUBLICLY, BUT --

A: YOU MEAN, DID WE DO IT DIPLOMATICALLY?

Q: YES.

A: I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE FULLY EXPLAINED OUR POSITION ON OUTSIDE FORCES IN ETHIOPIA.

Q: DID AARON SETTLE THE PROBLEM OF THE 40 MILLION DOLLARS IN SPARE PARTS AND OTHER MATERIEL?

A: I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING FOR YOU ON THAT. AND THE REASON I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT IS IT IS ANOTHER ONE OF A SERIES, AND THERE MAY BE SOMETHING I CAN GIVE YOU ON THE SPARE PARTS QUESTION.

Q: IS THERE ANY NEWS ON THE ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR HERE?

A: YOU MEAN, ON THE REPLACEMENT FOR THE ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR?
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Q: YES. DO WE INTEND TO REPLACE HIM?

A: I DON'T KNOW. I HAVE HAD NO INDICATION. I HAVEN'T
HEARD ANYTHING ON IT. WHEN DID HE RESIGN HIS POST, A
COUPLE WEEKS AGO?

Q: THREE WEEKS AGO.

A: I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. I WILL SEE IF I CAN FIND OUT
ABOUT WHEN THEY INTEND TO REPLACE HIM.

Q: HODDING, THERE IS A REPORT THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT
APPROVED THE SALE OF A NEW SHIPMENT OF ABOUT 200 TONS OF
AMMUNITION FOR M-16S TO ZAIRE, AND THAT IT WENT THERE ON
FEBRUARY 11. CAN YOU CONFIRM THAT, AND IF IT IS A CHANGE
IN POLICY TOWARDS ZAIRE?

A: M-16 AMMUNITION.

Q: YES. 200 TONS, AND IT WENT THROUGH A BASE IN MISSOURI.

A: I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT
IT.

RE SALE OF AIRCRAFT TO LIBYA:

A: THESE DECISIONS REFLECT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN
WITH LIBYA'S CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM, WHICH MAKES IT INAPPROPRIATE TO PERMIT LIBYA
TO ACQUIRE THE U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES OR
FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT THE EXPORT OF AIRCRAFT
WHICH COULD BE USED TO TRANSPORT TROOPS OR MILITARY EQUIP-
MENT.

Q: IS THAT LAST PART ALSO RELATED TO THE SITUATION IN CHAD?

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A: I AM NOT GOING TO SPECIFY THE VARIOUS CATEGORIES OR
AREAS IN WHICH IT IS RELATED. I THINK THAT THE GENERAL
STATEMENT IS GOING TO HAVE TO SPEAK FOR ITSELF.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY UP TO DATE REACTION ON THE RHODESIAN
INTERNAL SETTLEMENT?

A: I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING NEW TO OFFER YOU AT THIS TIME.
ASK ME AGAIN TOMORROW.

Q: JUST TO FOLLOW THAT UP, DO YOU HAVE ANY REACTION TO THE
PROPOSAL THAT SMITH HEAD THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT?

A: NO.

AGAIN, FRANKLY IT SHOWS THAT THE WHOLE MATTER IS STILL
UNDER A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF NEGOTIATION, BUT I DON'T
HAVE A REACTION TO THAT. I REALLY DO SUGGEST YOU ASK ME
FOR A REACTION AGAIN TOMORROW ON THIS GENERAL SUBJECT. VANCE

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